

## VERY LATE REBEL NEWS.

SHERMAN'S FORCES NEAR BRANCHVILLE.

REBELS BURN THE EDISTO BRIDGE.

Branchville and Augusta Separated.

NO MORE FIGHTING BELOW PETERSBURG.

The Great War Meeting at Richmond.

SECRETARY BENJAMIN'S SPEECH.

THE RAVINGS OF THE REBEL PRESS.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12, 1865.

The Richmond Whig of February 10 contains the following:

CHARLTON, Feb. 8.—A dispatch from Gen. Wheeler, Feb. 7, 8:30 p.m., says: "My pickets near Blackville this morning were charged by three brigades of cavalry, which drove them beyond the village. Deakins' Tennessee brigade being in the vicinity, met and charged the enemy, driving them back into the village.

[Blackville is on the line of the South Carolina Rail road, 12 miles from Branchville, and 47 from Augusta. It is only 29 miles south-west of Columbia.—Eds.]

I believed (said Mr. Benjamin) that Blair was Lincoln's messenger, and I really denied it at first. I should have done so, but when he repeated it the next day, I did not believe him. What was the answer from Lincoln to Blair?

"The enemy have made their appearance along the South Carolina Rail road, beyond the Edisto River. They halted a house within a mile and half of the railroad bridge. About 7 o'clock yesterday evening our troops were withdrawn to this side of the bridge, and the bridge burned. The destruction of this bridge severed all rail-road communication with Augusta."

A dispatch from Columbia, February 8, 3 p.m., says:

"A large column of the enemy's infantry struck the railroad at Grindell's Mill, Pinckney. It is at Blackville with three brigades."

Correspondent of the Herald-Democrat.

BIRDS HEAD, Wednesday, Feb. 1, 1865.

Sherman's army is now fully in motion, and we begin to hear news from it. His whole force is moving northward, east of Savannah River toward Branchville apparently.

Branchville containing about thirty houses, has been burned. Not a vestige is left.

The Rebels in Savannah are evidently asking questions about Augusta. They are evidently looking for him at Augusta. They are very certain that a battle will be fought near Branchville.

I learn that a considerable force of our infantry has been posted at the mouth of the Edisto River. To see the same article of hope employed by our President when he said it is easier to pay his huge debt than a major one, I will remark the movement means Charles-

ton, unless it is a raid.

Beyond Branchville for twenty miles the enemy has not been found in force.

Weather clear and pictures.

Rebel News From Grant's Army—No More Fighting—Both Sides Strengthening Their Lines—The Rebel Losses in the Late Battle.

WA. BIRDS, Feb. 12, 1865.

Richmond papers of the 11th have the following dispatch:

PETERSBURG, Feb. 8.—There was no fighting to-day and quiet was once more resumed. The enemy still holds his position on Hatcher's Run. His lines have thereby been extended, but not advanced. Gen. Sorrel was wounded in the lung, but the wound is not considered mortal. Col. Hoffman of Virginia was killed in the fight Monday. Our loss will not reach 500. The enemy's loss is estimated to be triple that number. The dead have all been buried, and the wounded all brought from the field. The enemy are erecting observatories on our right. The heavy cannonading yesterday afternoon was caused by our artillery shelling the enemy's lines. Both sides were engaged to-day in strengthening their new lines."

The Great War Meeting in Richmond—Speech of Secretary Benjamin—He Gives an Account of the Peace Conference—He Advocates the Arming of Negroes—Fierce Recusancy of Yankees, but Very Little Comfort for Rebels.

Special Dispatch to the N. Y. Tribune.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12, 1865.

Richmond papers of Friday, 10th inst., have been received here. Their columns are filled with the proceedings of the great war meeting held on the previous day. The following account is from The Daily Dispatch:

The largest and most enthusiastic meeting ever held in this city was convened at the African Church on yesterday. Two hours before the time of meeting the whole body of the colored men and women were crowded and quite as large a concourse was obliged to remain in the streets, being unable to obtain access to the building.

The objects of the meeting were to adopt resolutions expressive of the feelings of the people of Virginia, excited by the gross and pitiful acts by Lincoln in his late meeting with our Commissioners at Fort Monroe, and to take counsel as to our future.

At a few minutes past 10 o'clock, Mr. R. M. T. Hunter, president of the meeting, addressed Mr. J. P. Benjamin, Secy. of State, Mr. James Mayo, Mayor of Richmond; Capt. Somers, Confederate States Navy; the Hon. Messrs. Henry, Maxwell, and others, and the vice-presidents of the meeting, entered the building.

As they ascended the stand the Army Band, which was in attendance, played the Marschalline Hymn. At the conclusion of the air, Mr. Hunter, the president, requested that no calls might be made for speakers, as their names would be duly announced in the order in which they were to address the meeting.

SECRETARY BENJAMIN'S SPEECH.

The number of persons engaged in this meeting, with the cheers with which Hunter greeted every expression of patriotic sentiment, show the feelings with which all fed at the base thought of the grandeur which an arrogant Government has proposed to you—that you should bend the knee, bare the neck, and stoop subitely to the conqueror's pole; and all things give assurance that the fire of freedom burns unbrokenly in your souls. How different from one short week ago! It seems an age, so mighty has been the change. Then, despondency and hope deferred oppressed and weighed upon us; men were quenched, and asking if it were true that no honorable peace was attainable except by cession of all, then it was a dark hour. But now, perverse indisposition to negotiate that led to the disgrace of the nation. This decision went so far that it penetrated the legislative halls and threatened a disruption of the Senate of our country. Now, however, voices are heard all around, and hope begins on every countenance. Now, the resolute and war-worn heroes to whom we turned, now the cheering and parading infusions of our glorious women sheds light over our cause, and it will lead us in the path of duty and honor, which is the cause of this striking change in the aspect of our affairs. Have we found our salvation in foreign lands such as ours? to our friends, our countrymen, our need to stretch our arms for assistance? All may be European States come to our aid in the time of our extremity. We have lost the review. Our gallant General is silent and commanding—last Sherman and I heard him this morning, exhorting on the dangers of his drafting in the lines and subduing the cities of Charleston. Glorious Charleston! which for over two months has witnessed a fire such as had never been known on a devoted day. Our enemies are still breathing, and there is no voice from across the Atlantic of any aid to be expected. What then, is the meaning of this change? It is the knowledge which

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has come home to the understanding and the hearts of the people. We now know in the core of our heart that this people must conquer its freedom or die arm'd [Cheers] No Southerner ever dreamt of such a proposition as we were brought up to at Fort Monroe. Thank God we now know. The people know no other man the path which they must travel or perish. Our Commissioners sent to confer with the enemy, went with a piece of blank paper filled with one word, written by our President "Independence." What were they told? "Independence you are our subjects! Independence I strip the goods spattered from the shoulders of your officers; strip the uniforms from the men who make the treatise of peace; bring your leaders here, and you know what the material Lincoln." The issue is now before us, it is to live or perish. It is time to know how this Peace Commission came to be, and the facts which preceded their going. The Emperor Lincoln sent us the message of the close of last year, two months before Mr. Douglass' speech, were some words [Mr. Benjamin here read from Lincoln's message relative to the purity of the cause] to negotiate with the South, and the instant he did so, the rebels, showing the spirit and determination of our soldiers, That he could, was the way to us. These were merely soldiers' resolutions of course for the rebels' confidence in their rulers and contempt for the rebels.

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These, while the existing war between the United States and the Confederate States continues and will be on of course, the Southern Confederacy, as well as the Union, in defense of life, liberty and property, must be secure the right of self-government for the people, and

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